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A NEW VARIETY OF MUGWUMP.

BY THE HON. DORMAN B. EATON, FORMERLY PRESIDENT OF
THE CIVIL-SERVICE COMMISSION.

MR. CLARKSON, for eighteen months an Assistant Postmaster-General under President Harrison, in an article entitled "The Politician and the Pharisee," in the May number of this REVIEW, has labored hard to redeem the politician and discredit the Mugwump, but has succeeded only in presenting a new species of Mugwump.

The article condemns the national administration. It arraigns the President and his cabinet for not making more removals. It makes the politician and the *boss* the only patriots. It threatens the Republican party with ruin in 1892 unless it shall adopt the theories of these new Mugwumps. It misconceives and misrepresents the first century of our national history. It echoes the voice of the defeated Senator from Kansas by sneering at reform and representing all reformers as canting hypocrites. It makes the Pharisee the representative, not only of the old Mugwumps, but of all citizens above the mere politician and the partisan. It declares, without warrant, that these citizens discourage interest in political affairs, when, in truth, they have been most active in such affairs, and their efforts have caused more study, discussion, and scrutiny of the methods and theories of government and parties than ever before took place in our history. It invites the enlightened readers of this REVIEW to approve those most responsible for the political barbarism of expelling probably 20,000 postmasters from their places in eighteen months, and to condemn the President and his cabinet, who had the wisdom to arrest such disastrous proscription. The article appeals to those readers to aid the new Mugwumps in making supreme the power of the politicians under whose sway the scandalous scenes of those months would become the constant and intolerable condition of our politics.

In an article so ambitious we naturally expect to find not only some explanation on those points, but some sensible, or at least some definite, views upon the striking tendencies of public sentiment within its scope and at the time before us. We look for them in vain. Few things, for example, are so striking in our politics as the rapid growth and majestic power of public opinion, as contrasted with mere party opinion. Yet our author apparently takes no note of public opinion as a political force, party opinion, in his view, being universal and supreme. The increased influence of the independent or non-partisan press of the country—now so overshadowing the mere partisan journals as to make many of them contemptible—is one of the hopeful wonders of our time. Party contests are in large part but efforts to win this public opinion. This it is which mere politicians most dread and least understand. For nearly a generation public opinion has been growing stronger and stronger, as rapidly as mere party opinion has been growing weaker and weaker, as a political force. Why did not our author tell us how all this has happened? It is absolutely necessary to comprehend public opinion before we can understand how civil-service reform has steadily advanced despite the opposition of mere party opinion and politicians.

THE NORTH AMERICAN REVIEW, or any other of first rank, would sink in hopeless ruin in a year—as would the Republican party itself—if it should adopt the new party politics of Mr. Clarkson's article. He has come into its columns to appeal to the favor of that overmastering, non-partisan public opinion which he dreads, and which he knows no mere party publication can reach. If he believed party journals and party opinion were the dominating force, why did he make his appeal beyond them? Unfortunately for his cause, he did not comprehend that it was as needful to abandon the arguments, the threats, and the sophistries of the mere politicians as to go outside of their journals; and as a consequence, we must believe, he has repelled rather than convinced his readers. He has advanced a theory of the early years of the republic as repugnant to every chapter of its history as the mere politician was offensive to its statesmen.

The only explanation he offers of the increasing power of public opinion and of the non-partisan press is that the powerful independent journals have been bought up—that is, bribed—to abandon the Republicans and support the Democrats; certainly an

astonishing charge to be made without the least proof. Is it really believed that scores of editors of Republican journals are so corrupt as to thus betray their party? that scores of thousands of intelligent Republican readers are so ignorant or so depraved that they can be thus transferred to the ranks of their opponents by the mere treachery of such editors?

Another great problem passed over in silence is the reason why the movement and the law of 1883 for the reform of the civil service have been all the while steadily gaining strength, and were never so effective as at this moment. The article is to the last degree hostile to both. The reformers are ranked by it in the lowest grade of the Pharisees. The politicians, whom it eulogizes as models of virtue and mighty in power, have constantly but vainly opposed both the law and its execution. Why has this opposition so ignominiously failed? What is the source of the irresistible power demanding reform?

While in a vague way many indefensible opinions and purposes are charged or insinuated against the supporters of this reform, its essential principles are nowhere met by argument, and there is not so much as an attempt to answer the evidence of its great usefulness, which has commanded the support of every administration and every Congress, whether Democratic or Republican. The Republican politicians were certain it would fail when the Democrats succeeded to power; yet they increased its scope. Why did our author evade this great issue? He was called upon to explain such facts in consistency with his theories. He has not so much as attempted a denial of the great facts that the reform has brought more competent officers into the public service, has been highly favorable to education and manly character, has greatly diminished the sphere and evil of office-seeking, has increased the efficiency of every office to which it has been applied, has put most salutary checks upon congressional patronage-mongering.

That it condemns and largely prevents the prostitution of the appointing power for mere party ends, and the establishment of partisan despotism under the control of mere politicians and *bosses*, is very certain. It—the merit system of office—has opened the way for young men to come into the public service on the basis of their character and capacity, whatever selfish politicians, whether in Congress or out, may do or say. It largely suppresses

congressional patronage and takes away the spoils of the politicians within the whole range of the examinations, thus giving to honest worth what intrigue and base influence had before largely monopolized. There is far more liberty for removing the unfit under the reform system than there was before ; for no vicious partisan influence gave the officer his place or is at hand to keep him in it. By his own merits he won his position ; by his good service alone he can keep it, if only spoilsmen in high places can be held in check. No politician will aid him, for the politician aids only his favorites. The merit system is in no way hostile to true parties, but rather favors and strengthens them by relieving them of the demoralizing effects of partisan office-seeking. It opens the way for the free and manly support of great principles, which is the paramount function of a true political party. The merit system tends to increase the freedom of the people to choose all elective and representative officers, from those of towns and villages to the President himself. The charge made by our author that the people's control of local affairs is invaded is a strange delusion. The election of lawmakers, the work of legislation, and the approval and disapproval of bills by the President and governors are the great and true spheres of party action and influence ; and with none of these does the reform system interfere. It deals mainly with the abuse of the appointing power and with the invasion of executive functions by venal politicians and patronage-mongering legislators, who therefore hate it.

In Congress and in State legislatures its effect is to discourage and to a large extent arrest the unconstitutional and disastrous interference with executive affairs by legislative officers. To legislators are thus allowed more time and liberty for their true functions, and executive officers are left free to do their work. Both houses of Congress have apparently taken this view of the matter by voting year by year increased appropriations for carrying on the reform. When the new Mugwumps in Congress attacked the reform last winter, they were repulsed most disastrously.

Prior to his election as President, Mr. Harrison had not been very radically committed to this reform. Secretaries Tracy and Noble, perhaps, had hardly favored it. The Postmaster-General was possibly half as hostile to it as our author himself. If the Postmaster-General is not yet as complete a convert to the merit system as the public interest requires that he should be,—and as

we may believe he will some years hence wish he had been,—he at least appears to be very widely separated from his late subordinate. The President and his cabinet have not only sustained, but have extended, the reform. The examinations now cover many more offices than they did when President Harrison was inaugurated—a fact as creditable to himself and his cabinet as it is auspicious for the Republican party. Secretary Tracy, with the courage of his recent convictions, has enforced its principles in several of the navy-yards, and is now extending this application. Secretary Noble has promoted the extension of the merit system to the Indian service. The President himself has enlarged its sphere and suppressed opportunities of evading it. These statesmen obviously believe that by supporting this reform they best serve their country, and also do the most in their power to strengthen their party. They comprehend that public opinion would be shocked and certain ruin would await the Republican party should it now abandon the reform policy it has had the chief part in establishing. There are now more than 32,000 offices beyond the control of scheming politicians and patronage-mongers—offices which can be secured only by public competitive examinations as to capacity and character. More than 86,000 persons have been examined for filling places thus taken out of spoils-system politics and made the rewards of superior merit. It is no wonder that selfish politicians and bosses, who care more for patronage than for principle, are hostile, angry, and alarmed.

The ex-Assistant Postmaster-General, alone among those in high place under the present or any previous Republican administration, has reached different conclusions. This is clearly his right. He may have had considerable justification for his attack on the President, if a stern rejection of ruinous theories can be a justification. But can he fairly ask both houses of Congress, his own party, which has so long supported the reform, the President, and all the members of his cabinet, to come over to his view, on the peril of his heading a rebellious faction of new Mugwumps in the next election? We have some doubts on this point.

And now a few words concerning the new Mugwumps themselves, as presented by their champion. The one specific, essential, and infallible proof of being a Mugwump is the assertion and exercise of the right to criticise one's party, its officers and policy.

Thus tested, the politicians—members of the new faction, if the rebellion has gone so far—whom Mr. Clarkson champions are Mugwumps of the most radical kind. The variation of the new species from the old type is as unmistakable as their specific identity. The old Mugwumps, though they have their faults, insist on keeping party pledges, on making reforms, on raising the standard for office, on obeying the higher sentiments, on having faith in public virtue and independent manhood; and for these reasons they are called idealists, star-gazers, Sunday-school politicians, and the like. The new Mugwumps are very different in these particulars. They arraign presidents and administrations for trying to fulfil pledges. They hate reforms and reformers. They would make office the reward for partisan zeal and vicious work at the elections. They have faith in manipulation and money in politics. They believe in bosses and wish nothing better than mere politicians. The old Mugwumps believe in statesmen who stand above mere politicians; in statesmen who look upon the nation as something superior to any party, and something which every party ought to serve. They believe in parties, not as an end in themselves, but as organizations which may be made effective for the support of great principles, by which the common interests and welfare of a people and a nation may be advanced. They believe in aiding parties, and do aid them so far as they are true to their principles and pledges. Fidelity to principles and usefulness to the country are, in the view of the old Mugwumps, the supreme duty and the sole justification of political parties.

Mr. Clarkson inadvertently bears testimony to the perhaps sometimes excessive efforts of the old Mugwump to make things better; for he says he “first becomes better than his party, and next better than his country.” We see no evidence that the new Mugwumps will ever sin in this way.

The new Mugwumps make direct duty to party supreme. They can feel no patriotic obligation that is not to be discharged through working for a party. In setting forth that astounding theory concerning the early days of the republic to which we have referred, it is declared that the patriot tried to make the government better “by working for his party” rather than his country. But there were no parties when the Declaration of Independence was made, when the constitution was framed, or until near the end of Washington’s administration. Were there

then no patriotism and no means by which a patriot and statesman could work for his country? Certainly there were statesmen in those times, and it has been generally believed that something was done for the country. At least, a constitution was framed, a national government was organized, the great fundamental laws were enacted, the departments were set to work, the country took its place in the family of nations,—all this without parties and under a President and statesmen who warned us of dangers from party excesses. The plain truths of history, however, do not trouble the new Mugwumps in the least. They have no more place for them than they have for statesmen. The statesman is referred to by their champion as a person whom the detested “Pharisee uses,” and to whom the new Mugwump objects, preferring the politician and the boss.

It is certainly possible to use the word politician to designate a statesman, however great the shock such use of it produces. Common use makes him the manager of party politics, the active man in the manipulation of caucuses and conventions, the astute partisan who cares more for victory than for principle, more for his party than his country. As such our author commends him to the youth of the nation as the model patriot. Even the boss himself—the great embodiment of all that is worst in the mere politician—is extolled as hardly less than a saint, a martyr. Incredible as it may seem, these are the words of his eulogist: “He [the boss] does for his party what the class-leader does for his church. . . . He does a work so good and from a motive so pure that money could not hire it done.” Such words make us laugh when we are expected to admire. Yet we agree, and rejoice, that money could not hire an honest man to do most of the work done by the boss. Far better that most of it should be left undone. What is greatly needed is much less management, much less party coercion, much less of the work of the boss in our politics, and much more free voting and free acting on the part of the citizen. It is an insult to the best elements of human nature to class mere politicians with the earnest Christian and the self-sacrificing patriot.

Throughout the land—in the churches, charities, and hospitals, and all the manifold organizations for relieving affliction and uplifting society—self-sacrificing men and women nobly labor for the welfare of their country. In all the schools, seminaries, and col-

leges ; in all the walks of science, art, and literature ; in the innumerable organizations for the advancement and dissemination of knowledge ; through books and the public press in all its forms, the higher and most unselfish thought and aspiration of the people make their grand contributions to the intelligence, character, and public opinion of the nation. In nearly every domain of human thought and effort, more largely than in that of party politics, noble and gifted men of original genius make new contributions to the higher influences by which the morality and civilization of nations are moulded and righteous government is upheld. Compared with what springs from such sources to illustrate true self-sacrifice and to make up the higher life, the soul of a nation, all that is contributed by the mere politicians and the bosses is both small and mean indeed.

Yet the expounder of the new Mugwumpism, neglecting all these great elements of national character, tells us that the "soul of the government" is put into it through politics. Religion, morality, statesmanship, as uplifting and creative forces, are unnoticed. There is no apparent conception of the power of public opinion. Party opinion, party men, party discipline, politicians, practical politics, bosses, partisan patronage, offices, the power of appointment and removal—these, according to the new Mugwumps, are what put souls into government, make republics great, determine the destiny of nations, illustrate lofty virtues, deserve the admiration of the young men of this great country. "Every good citizen is a politician," says the champion of new Mugwumpism ; therefore every one not a politician is a bad citizen. What a bad citizen Washington must have been !

It is an interesting part of the new Mugwump theories that they claim the town meeting to be the basis and guarantee of the American system of government, with which civil-service reform is utterly incompatible. Now, it is unfortunate for this view that the town meeting originated and has been most developed and best preserved in Massachusetts, the very State which has longest and most widely, and with the most salutary results, enforced that civil-service reform which Mr. Clarkson detests. It has made converts of all parties and their leaders. It is being enforced not merely in the State administration (as generally understood), but in that of the counties, cities, hospitals, asylums, and other public institutions of the State, and even in street-cleaning in Boston.

Wherever these new Mugwump theories refer to definite facts in public affairs, they are confuted and rebuked.

There is no space to set forth the degradation, corruption, and ferocity in our politics which the adoption of the new Mugwump system of universal partisan proscription would cause. No other writer has ever proposed such a system. No government could long stand under it, and none since the republics of Greece and Italy have enforced it. It requires President Harrison to fill all the new judgeships with Republican politicians. The spoils system, which was first accepted by Jackson, and disgraced his administration, was civilization itself compared with the barbarity of this new Mugwumpism. In four years Jackson needed to make hardly two thousand appointments, in the whole public service, to fill all the places which his removals and coercion caused. The enforcement of the new Mugwump system made more appointments than this necessary in four months in a single one of the seven great departments. Men now alive will be living when the country will have more than five hundred thousand postmasters. Fifteen hundred appointments every secular day for a whole year would not meet the demands of the new Mugwumps in the matter of post-offices alone, to say nothing of the vast numbers of other offices. Does any sane man think republican government could long stand such a strain ?

Heretofore the most audacious and unscrupulous advocates of a partisan spoils system have tried to justify it as useful to the country. We now have it demanded in the name of the people, to gratify the "pride" of a victorious party, as Roman consuls demanded triumphs and sacrifices to gratify the pride and revenge of brutal, victorious legions. These are the astounding words : "They believe in changes . . . for the public good . . . and also from a sense of party pride"! After all the removals that the public good requires are completed, how many thousands should be added to gratify the savagery of party pride ? The celebrated declaration of Marcy about the victors and the spoils is reason and moderation compared with this savage theory of removals to gratify party pride. It would disgrace the republican system and the American name even in the half-civilized countries of Asia. Could anything be more disgusting and contemptible in the next presidential campaign than a faction of Republicans avowing such a policy and seeking such a consummation ?

To even compromise with such a faction would defeat any party. If such a faction takes the field, it should have for its platform an execution-block, on its flags a skull and bones, and for the baton of its boss an Australian boomerang or an Indian tomahawk.

We have no space for dealing with the preposterous claim that our early national history lends sanction to this new Mugwumpism. Nothing analogous to its party theories can be found in the national administration of the first half-century. They are as repugnant to the spirit of the early statesmen as Christianity is to heathenism. Jefferson, on succeeding a Federal President, made less than fifty removals, and he deprecated them as a necessity. In the whole forty years from Washington's election to that of Jackson there were less than a hundred removals for party reasons—not so large a number as were lately made on many single days in a single department, in trying to meet the insatiable demands of our new Mugwumps. The whole claim made that our constitution provides for party government and mere party responsibility rests on an utter misconception of its provisions. Such a government, of which that of England is the best example, requires that the victorious party should be able to control not only the executive department, but both branches of the legislature. No such result follows our elections. The President may be of one party, the Senate of another, and the House even of a third. Laws and policies must be the result of the agreement of the three, and hence much more than a mere party responsibility and control was clearly contemplated. It was plainly intended that a powerful and all-pervading public opinion should force all three branches of the government and all parties into allegiance to reason and duty. To make possible the kind of administration which this new Mugwumpism demands, we must not only repudiate the best precedents of the nation, but frame for it a new constitution.

DORMAN B. EATON.